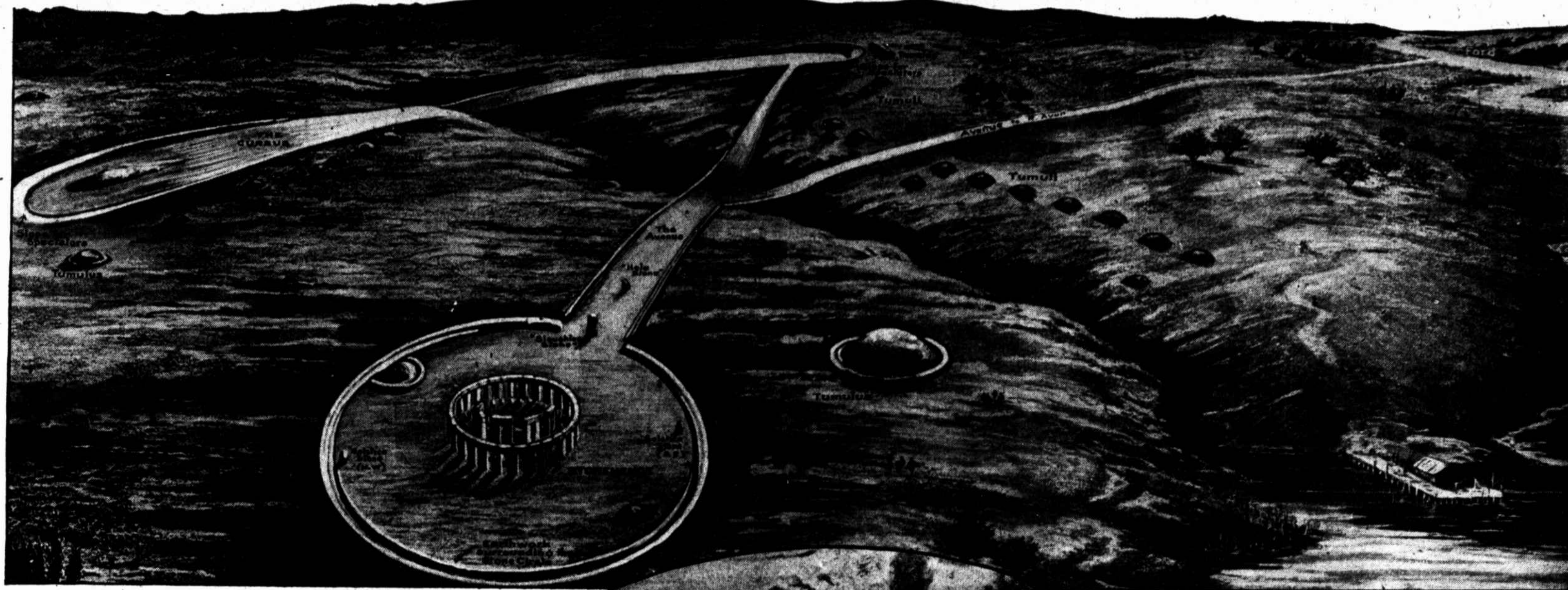


The Mystery of Stonehenge Explained at Last



The One Place Where the Prehistoric Britishers Could Have Their Games and Carry on Trade Without Danger of Getting Their Heads Cracked by a Stone Axe

THE English Office of Works, which has been restoring the ancient stone circles of Stonehenge under the direction of distinguished archeologists, has just discovered there a race course, the remains of an immense public market, traces of a deep pool and an ancient road running over the plains to the temple.

By these discoveries the mystery of the cluster of colossal stones put in place thousands of years ago during the Stone Age on Salisbury Plain, England, has at last been solved.

Stonehenge was the one place in England where the tribes could meet, hold their sports and trade with each other for useful goods and ornaments without any danger of having their heads cracked open with stone axes. The moment the character of the racecourse—which is a quite modern looking long oval with an "island" at one end around which the chariots turned, and banked-up places at each end for spectators—was recognized and the remains of the old market were found, everything became exceedingly plain.

We know that back in those old dim days places of worship or temples had their peculiar rules. It was a raw, rude time, when disputes were usually settled by the ancient equivalents of automatic or knife. Obviously it did a temple no good to have the worshippers killing each other all over the place, so the priests reserved for themselves the right of slaughter in the limits of the place of worship.

When the faithful assembled, therefore, they left their weapons at the gate. It was, indeed, just like when in our own old frontier days certain dance halls and other places of amusement insisted upon patrons leaving their pistols with the doorkeeper.

And so, exactly, was it at Stonehenge. When the skin-clad folk began flocking to the services they checked their stone axes, bows and stone-tipped arrows and their clubs just outside. If they didn't and tried to start something they soon wished they hadn't, because not only were the old priests good, able-bodied citizens, but they had, besides, the authority of the gods behind their fists.

Then, after it was certain that Stonehenge could enforce its peace rules, the people began to see it was a good place to trade. In those days when a man coveted anything he was apt to get it by the simple process of cracking the one who had it over the head. This did not do much for organized business. But at



An Old Print of a Druid Priest. These Ancient Gentlemen Reserved the Exclusive Right of Killing at Their Temple and So Made Stonehenge the One Safe Place for Stone Age British Sport and Trade.

Stonehenge a man either had to buy or leave it be. Steadily the public market grew around the great stone temple. Then came games and sports.

All of this the priests encouraged. Without doubt they got their share of the profits for the security they guaranteed. And so Stonehenge developed into perhaps the first great combined temple, race course, fair ground and market. And that is its whole secret.

For many centuries no one knew whose were the ancient hands that had raised the enormous slabs, nor just why they did it. Legends and fragments of folklore indicated that Stonehenge had at one time been a temple, and certain relics clearly showed that among the rites practised had been that of human sacrifice. Later, when science began to grow strong, it demonstrated that besides being a religious edifice Stonehenge



Painting of a Flower Sacrifice by a Druid Priestess Such as Is Now Known to Have Been Made to the "God of the River" in the Long Vanished Pool at Ancient Stonehenge.

had also been an astrological observatory. On the longest day in the year, the Summer solstice, the rising sun struck first a curious stone called the "Hele" stone, and then fell along the axis of the temple upon the "Slaughter Stone," used as an altar for human sacrifice. The shadows cast by two other stones, now called "Solstice Stones," were used to verify the astronomical calculations of the priests.

But why the unknown builders had picked out this particular spot in all England to erect their astonishing temple and what it was that drew the throngs of worshippers to it remained unknown. The mystery was further increased by the fact that the outer stones of Stonehenge are made of rock that is common on the Plain. But there was an inner circle composed of single standing stones not found anywhere in England at all. The nearest place they could be discovered was in Ireland.

It is now proven that these unfamiliar, or, as they are still called about Salisbury Plain, "Foreign Stones," are the remains of a far older temple erected anywhere from twenty to fifty thousand years ago by a race who were not British.

One of the English archeologists in charge of the work has this to say of the discoveries:

"Although at first there does not seem to be any close connection between a sanctuary and trade or sport, it must be remembered that such dissociation of

ideas is a modern innovation. In prehistoric days the business man was subject to more open methods of robbery than to-day. Negotiations were apt to terminate suddenly owing to the stronger man reaching for his club.

"But prehistoric folk extended to their temple that respect which is now commonly paid to the law courts. They were as anxious to avoid conflict with their priests as the modern merchant it to steer clear of lawyers. Why, then, should it be surprising that they should conduct their bartering under the protective aegis of the temple, where bloodshed was taboo unless conducted by the holy men themselves?"

"The double antiquity of Stonehenge is in itself strong ground for expecting traces of prehistoric commercial activity. Since the 'Foreign Stones' indicate sanctity previous to the coming of the trilitheon builders, it is not extravagant to assume that the only meeting-ground safe alike to the older residents and the immigrants should be the mutually sacred area. Intercourse would, therefore, naturally gravitate to Stonehenge, bringing with it a revival of trade with less local tribes already accustomed to the security of the neighborhood.

"But this, it may be asserted, is pure supposition. Fortunately, the theory is backed by corroborative evidence. Scattered about within a narrow circle enclosing the building we have found countless fragments of flint implements, tools fashioned of animal bones, broken domestic pottery, beads and bronze ornaments.

"In those days the water in the Avon

apparently stood at a higher level. If so, the lowlying ground to the southeast of Stonehenge must have formed a back-water sufficiently deep for the navigation of rafts. Facilities for the transport of goods by water were welcome in times when roads were practically non-existent. Piecing together all this evidence, we can hardly avoid the conclusion that Stonehenge was the Royal Exchange of its day."

The real antiquity of Stonehenge is, of course, unknown. The Druids, the priests of the early Britons, used it for the purposes told here at least 2000 years B. C. These were the ones who reared the trilitheons.

But the "Foreign Stones" were in place long before the days of the Druids. They were probably placed there by a colony of Africans—not, however, Egyptians. There are records of a powerful Neolithic, or Stone Age, maritime power which before history began established colonies throughout the then known world. Dr. Cope Whitehouse, of New York, the distinguished Egyptologist, has called attention to the evidence in Egyptian records of a great maritime nation, established to the west of the Nile, that threatened Egypt's supremacy at the height of her greatness.

According to Mr. Whitehouse's theory, these people, as a great sea power, must have left traces of themselves all over the accessible world to which their ships traded. He holds the remarkable rock structure known as Fingall's Cave, in Scotland, to be clearly of human origin, and thinks it reasonable to believe that

Reconstruction of Stonehenge Showing the Temple, the "Cursus" or Race Course, the Avenues and the Probable Location of the Pool Where Goods Were Carried to Market and Druid Sacrifices—Milder Than Those Within the Circle of Great Stones—Were Made. The Tumuli, or Little Hillocks, Around the Race Course and About the Temple Were Probably Mounds Raised for Still Unknown Religious Purposes. They May Have Been Graves of Chieftains or Druid High Priests. (Drawing Copyrighted by The Illustrated London News.)

Workmen Repairing with Modern Derricks the Fallen Stones of the Once Mysterious Temple of Stonehenge.



it was the work of the forgotten African race.

It is also reasonable to believe that the older part of Stonehenge is the creation of the same people, since both works belong to an advanced period of the Stone Age, with similar characteristics of rough grandeur. The discovery of a temple west of the Nile of similar workmanship to Stonehenge strengthens the theory that this maritime power, whose existence has been forgotten, covered Europe with their stone monuments.

That many dreadful scenes went on in ancient days within the great circle is certain. If those who thronged to Stonehenge on the days of the races and the markets were safe so far as their worldly enemies were concerned, there were scores of miserable wretches who looked forward to those same days with horror. These were the human sacrifices, and beyond the outer circles of stones the scientists found a circle of deep pits filled with human bones, evidently the relics of these sacrifices.

Although some of the rites of the Druids were peculiarly cruel, many of their other religious ceremonies were very beautiful and gentle.

Their religion recognized spirits of the earth, the streams and woods and so on, as well as the greater ones of the sun and moon. The priestesses, or Druidesses, had charge of these softer phases of the ceremonials, and the painting on this page is a famous artist's conception of one of these milder rites. The Druidess, surrounded by her maidens, is offering sacrifice of flowers to the God of the River.